**Week 30**

This week a couple of play problems from one of my favourite writers, Hugh Kelsey.

You play in 4h with no opposition bidding.

xxx

Qxx

AQTx

ATx

Kxx

AKJxxxx

Jx

x

the lead is CK ?

the danger is if the diamond finesse loses and the SA is also wrong you may lose 3 spades and a diamond.

What can be done? You have 9 winners with 7 trumps and 2 aces and suppose you can arrange to establish another diamond trick without allowing east to gain the lead. How to do this?

Try the effect of ducking the CA at trick one. You can win the possible  diamond switch discard the DJ on the CA and lead the DQ discarding a spade if east plays low so if west wins the DK you have established a 10th winner with the DT without east gaining the lead .

If east covers with the king you ruff high draw trumps ending in dummy and again the DT is the 10th trick.

The hold up play in clubs has attacked the hypothetical diamond entry with east enabling you to take the ruffing diamond finesse into the safe hand.

On our second hand we play again in 4h on the following lay out

Ax

K8xx

xxx

KTxx

Kxx

JT9xx

Ax

AQx

the lead is the DQ and the contract looks ice cold since even if there are 2 trump tricks to lose the diamond will be the defence's third and last trick. Can you see the small risk and the counter measure to that risk ?

In bridge the ability to visualise is a very important quality so I will give you the East hand now

QTxxx

AQx

Kxxx

x

if you win the first diamond and play a trump east will win the first trump and switch to their singleton club and on regaining the lead with the HA put partner in with the DJ to collect a club ruff and another contract bites the dust .The solution for declarer is simply to duck the DQ lead which denies the defence the communication to take the club ruff.

So two hands where declarer needs to hold up on the opening lead.

**Week 29**

I thought this week I would pretend to be Maria in the Sound of Music (what a thought I hear you say) and talk about things which constitute poor bridge. The following are not in my view "bright copper kettles or warm woollen mittens"!

My first gripe is situations in the bidding where players bid the same hand twice so having already described their hand they take another bid with no justification so say we hold

Kxxx

Kxxx

xx

xxx

and the bidding goes 1s from partner (2d) 2s (3d ) 3s -p and now we decide to bid 4s . 2s described our hand perfectly and 3s from partner said they wished to play in 3s not 4s so we do not bid 4s.

Another which I saw recently was the following

1s (2h) 2s (3h) 3s (4h) p p? A 4s bid now is either a very clever bit of sandbagging (deliberately underbidding in order to be doubled in 4s when it is cold) or it is a breach of bidding discipline and playing against the majority of opponents I vote for the latter and reach for my red card as a matter of principle!

A third which is to open with a pre-empt say 3s and hear opponents reach 4h so continue with 4s with no support from partner by definition either the opening is a mistake( the hand is too strong ) or the 4s is a mistake bidding the same hand for a second time.

My second gripe is the two level overcall on unsuitable hands. The 2 level is one level higher than the one level!! So therefore to make a bid requires at the very least a decent quality suit and normally  a hand of opening bid strength. So say we hear 1h our right and we hold the following hands and have to decide whether to enter the bidding

KQxxx

AJx

xx

xxx

1s yes no problem a one level bid certainly not a two level overcall mind you

Kxx

Qxx

AJxxx

Qx

2d certainly not to bid 2d is utterly wrong since you have a defensive hand totally lacking in playing potential which  if it is doubled will necessitate a call for the ambulance paramedics.

A 2d overcall show look like the following hand

Kxx

xx

AJTxxx

Ax

the fundamental difference is we have a 6 card rather than a 5 card suit which protects our side against being doubled and a probable 5/6 tricks.

Kxxx

x

AJxxx

KQx

yes we wish to enter the auction over 1h but double is fine and I would make the same bid with one less spade  and a 4th club.

I have seen experienced players overcall at the two level on

Kxx

Qxx

JTxxx

Ax

Incredible to overcall at the two level on a hand you would not open the bidding with a jack high suit they must be training to be a kamikase pilot!

The only time a 5 card suit is acceptable is when that suit is very good or you have a good hand which needs to be bid, which will often be bidding hearts over a 1s opening. Double or 1nt, where suitable, is more flexible than putting all your eggs in the 2 level overcall basket.

The other point here is how a jump overcall is played and broadly there are three choices weak, intermediate or strong. The majority of tournament players prefer the weak option. Intermediate jump overcalls are all fine and good but to me they seem duplicatory since if I hold

Kx

Axx

xx

AQJTxx

 and opponents open 1M then 2c describes this hand perfectly so 3c to show the same hand has no point so it is better to play the jump as weak or even strong rather than intermediate.